IV. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently Amended) A reticle manipulating device with an at least substantially closed housing for maintaining clean-room conditions inside the housing, which has several functional units, each of which conducts at least one function for the reticle inside the housing, wherein a first functional unit is designed as an input/output station with an opening through which~~for introducing and discharging~~ reticles are introduced and discharged in and out of the housing, a manipulating device also arranged inside the housing for transferring the reticles from the input/output station to ~~the~~ at least one other functional unit and vice versa, is hereby characterized by an interface of the first functional unit, by means of which the ~~at least one~~ first functional unit can be connected to the reticle manipulating device, the interface having a mechanical and an electrical part forming a detachable mounting and electrical connection of the first functional unit with the housing of the reticle manipulating device.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The reticle manipulating device according to claim 1, further characterized ~~by an~~ in that the input/output station~~, in which~~ has several input/output units, each of which can be mounted in a detachable manner and has a separate opening for introducing and discharging reticles in and out of the housing, wherein a height of at least ~~several~~ one of the several input/output units corresponds ~~each time~~ substantially to a whole-number multiple of another height of another one of the several input/output units ~~a basic grid size~~.

4. (Original) A reticle manipulating device system, comprising a reticle manipulating device according to claim 1 and at least one second functional unit, which is different in its construction from the first functional unit, whereby the first functional unit can be exchanged for the second functional unit.

5. (Currently Amended) The reticle manipulating device system according to claim 4, further characterized by functional units of different ~~types of~~ functions.

6. (Currently Amended) The reticle manipulating device system according to claim 4, further characterized by several functional units of the same ~~type of~~ function.

7. (Original) The reticle manipulating device system according to claim 4, further characterized in that a stocking device is provided as a functional unit for the simultaneous intermediate stocking of several reticles inside the housing.

8. (Withdrawn) A reticle stocker for the intermediate stocking of exposure masks for the production of electronic components, which has a closed housing, in which an intermediate stocking device is provided for the intermediate stocking of exposure masks, is hereby characterized by a reticle manipulating device according to claim 1.

9. (Currently Amended) A reticle manipulating device comprising:

a housing capable of having a controlled environment therein;

at least one processing module connected to the housing and capable of processing a reticle; and

a transport apparatus connected to the housing for transporting the reticle between the at least one module to another portion of the housing;

wherein the at least one module is removably connectable to the housing, the at least one module having an interface adapted for removably coupling the module to the housing, and characterized in that the at least one module is selectable for connection to the housing from a number of different interchangeable modules each having a different predetermined characteristic and being capable of connection to the housing.

10. (Withdrawn) A process tool comprising an integral reticle manipulating device according to claim 9.

11. (Withdrawn) The tool according to claim 10, wherein the tool is at least one of a lithography tool, a reticle patterning tool, a pod stocker, a single reticle transfer device or a multiple reticle transfer device.

12. (Withdrawn) The tool according to claim 11, wherein the housing has an opening formed therein communicating with another portion of the tool, the opening being sized to allow passage of the reticle between the housing and the other portion of the tool, and adapted to maintain the controlled environment inside

the housing as the reticle passes through the opening between the housing and the other portion of the tool.

13. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module is adapted for cleaning the reticle using at least one of a gas based, a wet based, or electromagnetic radiation based cleaning method.

14. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the housing is capable of holding an inert gas or pressurized gas atmosphere therein.

15. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module has a detector adapted for detecting at least one of an electric charge on the reticle, or airborne molecular contamination.

16. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module has a camera for magnified visual inspection of the reticle.

17. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module has a reader for reading indicia on a pellicle located in the at least one module.

18. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module has a detector for detecting flatness of the reticle or of a pellicle located in the at least one module.

19. (Previously Presented) The tool according to Claim 10, wherein the at least one module is adapted for performing offline reticle verification when the tool is idle.

20. (Previously Presented) The tool according to Claim 10, wherein the at least one module is adapted for testing the reticle to verify integrity of a process system provided by the tool.

21. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module is adapted to store the reticle therein, and the reticle is at least one of an extreme ultra violet bare reticle, a 157 mm reticle, an x-ray reticle, or a SCALPEL reticle.

22. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the module has a processor with programming for performing predictive maintenance, tracking the number of times the reticle has been exposed to light, and characterized in that the programming includes historical models for predicting reticle servicing, cleaning or disposal.

23. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module has a control for controlling at least one of a temperature or humidity within the at least one module.

24. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module is adapted for preconditioning the reticle prior to transfer of the reticle from the at least one module to the other portion of the housing.

25. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module is adapted for gathering particles from the reticle.

26. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module is adapted for buffering one or more reticles.

27. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module has a scribing device for scribing indicia on the reticle.

28. (Previously Presented) The device according to Claim 9, wherein the at least one module is adapted for mounting and demounting a pellicle.